

S-E-C-R-E-T

20 October 1964

MEMORANDUM FOR THE DIRECTOR

SUBJECT: Castro and the New Soviet Leaders ✓

SUMMARY

The limited information so far available on the policies of the new Soviet leadership suggests that there will not be a basic change in the Soviet-Cuban relationship. The Soviet leaders have already strongly reaffirmed their support of Castro. However, Khrushchev's departure poses a new element of uncertainty for Fidel, particularly on such a delicate issue as that of U-2 overflights; here we think the chances of dangerous Cuban actions have receded. It is not likely that the new Soviet leaders feel confident enough of their position to seek any early crisis with the US, and Castro will probably recognize the need for a period of consolidation in Moscow.

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GROUP 1
Excluded from automatic
downgrading and
declassification

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1. The deposition of Khrushchev naturally calls into question all elements of Soviet policy, especially those areas where Khrushchev's personal predilections were dominant factors. To a great extent this applies to the Cuban situation. The first evidence on Soviet-Cuban relations, however, suggests that no major changes were introduced during the conversations with President Dorticos, who was the only Communist leader in contact with the new Soviet leaders during and immediately after the coup. With the minor modifications noted below, the judgments made in NIE 85-64, "Situation and Prospects in Cuba," 5 August, 1964, remain generally valid.

2. Indeed the joint communique following Dorticos' visit reaffirmed Soviet solidarity with and support for the Castro regime. The new Soviet leaders also reiterated charges that US imperialist circles are undertaking continuous aggressive action against Cuba. However, the new leaders in Moscow are unlikely to feel confident enough of their positions to risk any major crisis with the US, and Castro probably recognizes their need for a period of consolidation in the USSR.

Overflights

3. Of course, the departure of Khrushchev poses new uncertainties for Castro. This is particularly true in the case

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of such a delicate issue as the U-2 overflights of Cuba; Khrushchev himself had been playing a leading role in the campaign to bring about their cessation. In NIE 85-64, we estimated that after the US elections Castro was likely to raise this question before the UN, and that if he made no progress in forcing a favorable political solution, there was considerable danger that he would order a shootdown. Though we cannot exclude the possibility of such a shootdown, we believe that the odds of its occurring are less. Moreover, because both he and the USSR face more urgent problems, Castro may even defer for a time pressing the overflight issue at the UN. He may also have been sobered by the US action in the Gulf of Tonkin.

Other Implications

4. As for the longer run, it is too early to predict the attitudes of the new Soviet leaders, even assuming that there are no major personnel changes. In general, we think that for some time at least they are likely to be more reserved and cautious than Khrushchev, and less likely to gamble. At the same time, they are probably going to put greater value on restoring unity within the international Communist movement and on attacking US "interventions" whether in Southeast Asia or Cuba. Castro has had some fear that, in seeking detente with the US, Khrushchev might compromise Cuba's interests; the new leaders' initial assurances should help dispel these apprehensions.

5. If the new Soviet leaders and Castro can work out a modus vivendi on the overflight issue, we would expect no important changes in other aspects of their relations. Economic and military assistance will almost certainly continue, although the new leadership may seek to trim the economic aid program. However, since Castro's endorsement and support for the new leaders is an important factor in the USSR's standing in the international Communist movement, he is still in a position to exert considerable leverage. He might, for example, get more Soviet technical assistance in maintaining Soviet military equipment.

6. We also look for no change in Castro's attitude towards Latin America. There has been friction between Castro and Khrushchev on this issue, and presumably the new leaders will be no more sympathetic to Castro's modus operandi in this theatre. But this is not a matter of major consequence to Moscow, and we would expect to see Castro continue his agitation in Latin America, and to see the USSR make no major effort to restrain him.

FOR THE BOARD OF NATIONAL ESTIMATES:


SHERMAN KENT
Chairman

25X1

Holms

Christ. indictment

11-3

This memo

In present circumstances, the likelihood of his ordering a shoot down has probably diminished somewhat; nevertheless the ~~present~~ danger still exists,

What problems are there in submitting more

Pridan

SK -

Dear Boss -

1) The DCI does not want to send the memo on Castro - the new Sov. Leaders to the White House. He said, "hang on to it a while". Rather than volunteer to annoy Mr Chase, I propose not to tell him he's not going to get it today. Jim

25X1 thought Chase didn't have any deadline anyway. NB: The CIA memo of 22 Oct, in IP 16 b said "There is a good chance that Castro will be less inclined to press the matter [shootdown] soon."

2) Re 11-3. The DCI doesn't want any

go ahead

with the text. His view is that there are plausible alternative explanations of the various installations & that we shouldn't go out on a limb too far on any particular one.

3) He's pressing on getting more on Lanchow & while he agrees the estimate on Chinese advanced weapons moved in on the back of the stove for the moment, "Don't keep it too far back and be ready to go when we get more information."

WJF